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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Chairman of Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament briefs correspondents on progress achieved in past six months to destroy, remove or render harmless Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

- General Assembly welcomes establishment of Trust Fund for Peace to support activities of United Nations University for Peace.

- Anti-apartheid Committee calls on Japan to re-evaluate decision to lift economic sanctions against South Africa.

- Four countries of Northeast Asia agree on economic cooperation under auspices of United Nations Development Programme.

- Need to enhance communications' capabilities of developing countries stressed in Special Political Committee.

- Human Rights Committee, in examination of second periodic report of Morocco, expresses concern over evidence of restrictions of religious freedoms and women's rights.

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The Chairman of the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, Rolf Ekeus, today briefed correspondents at Headquarters on a closed plenary meeting held by the 21-member Commission at Headquarters from 21 to 23 October.

He said the Commission had concluded during its meeting that it had "come quite far" with regard to the first phase of the implementation of section C of the Security Council's resolution 687 (1991) on the identification, size and format of the Iraqi weapons programme. That did not exclude, however, he said, that there were things that the Commission did not know about. Mr. Ekeus added that the Commission was underway with the destruction procedures -- in the chemical weapons area quite a number of items had already been destroyed. In the ballistic missiles area a large number of important heavy items had also been destroyed, he said.

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Referring to the two plans adopted by the Council with regard to verification and monitoring of Iraq's obligations not to acquire weapons of mass destruction again, Mr. Ekeus told correspondents that the Commission had also discussed during its two-day meeting the future compliance by Iraq.

Mr. Ekeus reported that, together with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has the main responsibility for nuclear issues, the Special Commission had fielded 20 inspection teams, involving almost 300 individuals from 34 countries. The Special Commission would present a report to the Security Council at the beginning of next week.

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The General Assembly this morning welcomed the establishment of the Trust Fund for Peace by the Secretary-General, which is expected to direct voluntary contributions, administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to the University for Peace.

The University, established by the Assembly in 1980 as an international academic institution for humanistic education, offers master's degree programmes at its campus in Costa Rica and its European Centre for Peace and Development in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

In adopting a resolution on the University, without a vote, the Assembly also invited Member States to contribute to the Fund and accede to the International Agreement for the University for Peace.

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The Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, Ibrahim A. Gambari, said in statement yesterday that the Committee had learned with concern that Japan had lifted almost all its economic sanctions against South Africa.

He said the Committee viewed the decision by Japan as "premature and counterproductive" to the sustained efforts by the international community to maintain a political leverage on South Africa that would assist South Africans in reaching a peaceful and democratic solution to their national problem.

The international community had not determined, and situations in South Africa did not yet warrant the view, that the process towards an apartheid-free South Africa had become "irreversible".

The Committee urged the Japanese Government to re-evaluate its decision, taking into account the present situation in South Africa.

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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) announced today that four countries of Northeast Asia had agreed to collaborate on practical steps for economic cooperation, under its auspices. Calling the agreement "a historic

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act", the UNDP said that China, the two Koreas and Mongolia had endorsed, at a meeting in Pyongyang, a joint action plan for the development of the Tumen River Area. The plan was part of a larger economic and technical cooperation programme envisaged for the sub-region which was expected to lead to investments worth $30 billion over a period of twenty years. The UNDP said the Tumen area "could become another Rotterdam or Hong Kong" -- a trade and transport centre for the mainland Northeast Asia.

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The need to narrow the gap between developed and developing countries' communications capabilities was stressed by speakers this morning as the Special Political Committee continued its consideration of questions relating to information.

Discussion focused on calls for establishment of a new world information and communications order which would narrow those differences while ensuring the free and unhindered flow of information between all States and regions. Several speakers considered that the new order should be based on the principles of the Charter and should embrace the principles of respect for the sovereignty and for the social and cultural values of States.

The view was expressed that the international press did not give adequate coverage to the interests of developing countries, the least developed countries in particular. It was further stated that use of new technologies could help such countries to convey their aspirations, achievements and views in the international media.

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Concern over, among other things, evidence of secret detention centres, prolonged arbitrary detention and restrictions on the freedom of expression of religion in Morocco was expressed this morning by members of the Human Rights Committee meeting in Geneva. However, they also welcomed Morocco's cooperative attitude and recent positive developments in that country.

The comments from Committee members came at the end of the consideration of the second periodic report by Morocco, detailing how it gave effect to the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Making a final statement, the representative of Morocco, El Ghali Benhima, stressed the importance of relying on accurate information. The international community recognized that there was no perfect state of law, he said. Consolidating the state of law in Morocco was, in his opinion, a question of expanding the human rights horizons of the country.

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